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ABSTRACT

This essay discusses the concept of tolerance and the role of tolerance in education. Glimpses from the history of intolerance and tolerance are presented and various theories of tolerance dealt with. Tolerance is defined here as the ability for people to live in peace and harmony with those who differ from them in language, religion, race and/or custom and to appreciate those differences. Education for tolerance is seen as essential for the peace and survival of mankind. The work of UNESCO in the area of education for tolerance and peace is also discussed. (EH)

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EDUCATION FOR TOLERANCE AND PEACE

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EDUCATION FOR TOLERANCE AND PEACE

Surya Nath Prasad

Dr. Surya Nath Prasad, Chandrapur, India, President of IAEWP (International Association of Educators for World Peace), discusses in this text the concept of tolerance and the role of tolerance in educational efforts. Glimpses from the history of intolerance and tolerance are presented and various theories of tolerance dealt with. Tolerance means that we live in peace and harmony with people who differ from us in language, religion, race and custom and that we appreciate people although they differ from us in many ways. Education for tolerance is seen as essential for the peace and survival of mankind, and the work of UNESCO in the area of education for tolerance and peace is discussed.

EDUCATION FOR TOLERANCE AND PEACE

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Introduction

The ancient epic Mahabharata teaches the ideal of tolerance in Sanskrit verse:

> "Small souls inquire, 'Belongs this man
> To our own race or sect or clan?'
> But larger-hearted men embrace
> As brothers all the human race."

Hence all our thoughts and action should promote the development and happiness of all mankind, irrespective of caste, creed, race, and nationality. This is why renowned Indian writer Shri Jaishankar Prasad advised all men on earth in a Hindi poem:

> "O man, see laughing others, Laugh and be happy.
> To expand your happiness, Make others happy."

Everyone is a very tiny part of the larger whole that is humanity. At present, each one represents about one of five and a half billionth of humanity. Voltaire prays to God in his famous writing Traité sur la tolerance:

> "Oh, Thou of beings, of all worlds of all times (...) we pray (...) that all the little differences in (our) clothes, in our inadequate languages, in our ridiculous customs, in our imperfect laws, in our illogical opinions, in our ranks and conditions, which are so

> disproportionately important to us and so meaningless to you, that these small variations that distinguish those atoms that we call men one from another may not be signals for hatred and persecution."

Ignorance and wrong understanding about others are the main causes for hatred and intolerance which give rise to violence: structural as well as physical. Akbar the Great (1542-1605), Mughul Emperor of India, said:

> "I consider it my duty to make sure I understand others. If they act in accordance with the will of God, it would be reprehensible of me to interfere in their actions; if they do not, they are victims of their ignorance and deserve pity."

UNESCO was created because its founders understood that "ignorance of the ways of others" gave rise to irrational hatred, violence and ultimately genocide. This was why the great visionary Victor Hugo once said: "A human being who can read has been saved". Clearly 'reading' in this context has a wider symbolic meaning – not only reading words to get to know oneself and society and its history, but also reading the world, that is to say other people – in order to join with them in knowledge, respect and tolerance; ultimately reading to 'be saved' means saved from oppression, dependence and hunger.

Therefore, knowledge and learning about others can make people tolerant towards each other and lead them to live in peace and harmony.

History of Intolerance and Tolerance

It is said that for a considerable period prior to 1914 the civilized world was comparatively tolerant. However, intolerance and tolerance have a long history. Youth massacres in China (9th Century A.D., 882 A.D., 1645, 1864, 1870 and 1989), Jallianwala Bagh massacre (13 April 1919), sixty million massacred by Stalin (1924, 1928 to 1934), genocide of Jews in Germany (1938-43), Jews as Guinea Pigs (1942-43), one million P.O.Ws. starved (1945), The My Lai massacre (1968), genocide in Bangladesh (1971), the Burundy genocide (1972, 1988), genocide in Cambodia (1975, 1977-1979), genocide in Sri Lanka (1984), Timisoara genocide (1989) and many cases of atrocities on minorities in different nations of the world which took many lives. The many deaths in the two World Wars and

countless casualities in several civil wars in various nations, and still today the continuation of violence of ethnic cleansing, terrorism, cultural and religious extremism, genocide, exclusion and discrimination tell us about a long history of intolerance.

There was a time also when tolerance took root in history. The League of Nations was founded after World War I, and the United Nations after World War II. Despite the failure of the League of Nations to avert World War II, there was no disposition to abandon the attempt to create international institutions as the political basis for an enduring peace and tolerance. For inculcation of the spirit of tolerance in the past there were Magna Charta (1215), Habeas Corpus (1674) and Bill of Rights (1689), Toleration Act of 1689 and Occasional Conformity Act of 1711 in England, a Declaration of Rights of Man and the citizen (1789) in France, a Bill of Rights in the United States (ratified in 1791), and legislation concerning the protection of the individual against actions by the authorities dates back to about 1350 in Italy. And now the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and the two International Covenants of 1966 of Civil and Political Rights, and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights were expressions of deep international concern for human rights protection and tolerance. At present, it continues by various Declarations in the promotion of tolerance, viz. UN Declaration of Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1975), UN Declaration of the Child, UNESCO Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice (1978) and UNESCO Appeal on the Struggle Against Racism (1981), UN Vienna Declaration on Human Rights (1993) and UNESCO Barcelona Declaration (1994) on the Role of Religion in the Promotion of A Culture of Peace have created a long history for promoting tolerance among people of different faiths, languages, cultures, customs and nations. In recent times, two Germanys joined together, people of the totalitarian regime of the former USSR split into 12 states and they form a Russian Federation – a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for their own independence, peace and progress. People of South Africa became independent in 1994 from white minority rule and they formed a democratic government, and there was an end of East-West confrontation and ideological disputes on the basic concept of tolerance for the maintenance of national and international peace.

Indian history reveals that periods when tolerance reigned supreme were also periods of great achievement. The age of Guptas was a golden one in

the history of India with regard to tolerance. According to the Chinese traveller, Fahien, who was a visitor to India during the period, the reign of Guptas was marked by absolute religious tolerance. The Gupta Kings were devotees of Vishnu, but they gave their Buddhist and Jain subjects full freedom of worship. The modern democratic India has adopted a secular policy to facilitate tolerance among diverse people to live in peace and harmony.

Theories of Tolerance

The advent of tolerance was largely the work of philosophers. Voltaire was its real champion. Voltaire (1694-1778) indirectly attacked the scourge of fanaticism that he was to fight throughout his life. In 1728, in his epic poem La Henriade, he praised King Henri IV for setting out to be the wise, enlightened monarch of all Frenchmen, whatever their beliefs. The concept of tolerance he tackled directly in his Lettres Philosophiques (1734), his Dictionnaire Philosophique (1766) and his Questions sur l'Encyclopédie (1772). Three years before his death, through his Le cri du sang innocent (The cry of innocent blood), he was to petition Louis XVI to review the trial of a victim of fanaticism whose cause he made famous, the Chevalier de la Barre. His main contribution to this war of ideas is still his Traité sur la tolerance (1763). The exceptional importance of this text lies in the fact that Voltaire's treatise, unlike John Locke's Letter on Toleration (1690), to which he pays tribute, is not simply a philosophical dissertation. K. Satchidananda Murty and A.C. Bouquet have traced different theories of tolerance. The various theories will give glimpses of the idea of tolerance of renowned thinkers of their times.

Ashoka's Theory: In Ashoka's time, there were three major religions – Vedism, Jainism and Buddhism, and many minor religions. He decided that only harmony among all of them would be excellent. 'Samavaya eva sadhuh' is a classic utterance (Edicts of Ashoka). Ashoka desired that all religions should coexist at all places and increase in their inner strength. He hoped that the followers of all religions would learn much from each other and follow the auspicious path. Ashoka enjoined on all his subjects the duty of mutually respecting each other's religion, for thus only, he said,

can one increase, or spread, one's religion and help others' religions. He who reverences his own religion, and disparages others', destroys his own religion (Edicts of Ashoka).

Plato's Theory: While Ashoka advocated freedom of belief and thought on the ground that all such sincere efforts aim at the same goal and that men could follow the same pattern of conduct on different theoretical grounds, Plato pleaded for freedom of thought on the ground that nobody could arrive at absolute truth and that the Universe could not be fathomed by anyone. Plato was not consistent, for in The Republic and more so in The Laws, he suggests intolerance in the interest of the stability of the political order.

Spinoza's Views: Spinoza thought that government should not promote any religion which requires anything more than the minimum which all reasonable men could accept. Spinoza believed that public order was incompatible with suppression of freedom of thought and speech. While in his public conduct a man ought to conform to "justice and charity", he may choose any creed or faith that appeals to his conscience and reason (Theological-Political Treatise). In Spinoza's days, the enemies of intellectual freedom were the churches and priests. Hence, he thought they should be controlled by the government.

Locke's Conception: As against Spinoza's views, Locke adopted the Platonic type of argument. He argued for tolerance on the ground that human knowledge is limited and is liable to error; so nobody could be certain about the absolute truth of any religious belief. Locke says "We should do well to commiserate our mutual ignorance and endeavour to remove it in all the gentle and fair ways of information, and not instantly treat others as obstinate and perverse because they will not renounce their own and receive our opinions." (A Letter Concerning Toleration). Locke thinks that toleration should not be extended to those who are not prepared to extend it to others. According to him complete toleration may lead to its own destruction.

Descartes' Ideas: Descartes in his Treatise on the Passions called Generosité says that men who do not have self-confidence in reason

(generosité), who are not prepared to discuss, examine and change (if necessary) their own beliefs and those of others, entirely on the grounds of empirical experience and reason, who believe in some authority (a book, the pope, or some ancient author like Manu, Aristotle, or Marx) as a final and absolute on questions relating to individual conduct and social organisation, and who seek to impose these on others whenever an opportunity presents itself, have no right to expect toleration from others, as that might lead to an end of all toleration. Unlimited toleration may lead to scepticism and indifference to whatever might happen resulting in the suppression of all liberties, while intolerance is detestable. Therefore, toleration must be coupled with commitment to some principle based on reason.

Leibniz's Opinion: Plato and Locke thought that man cannot know absolute truth, and therefore tolerance is justified. But Leibniz justified tolerance on the ground that truth can be known and expressed in many ways, and that these do not contradict each other, but only correspond to each other. To reduce truth to unity and deny the possibility of a multiple conception of truth leads to intolerance. Leibniz wrote, "I flatter myself that I have entered the harmony of the different realms and that I have seen that both parties are in the right, provided they do not clash." Leibniz based this faith of his on his metaphysics that the world consists of a multiplicity of Monads, which, even though they have no access to each other, mutually correspond, contributing to the harmony of universe. Leibniz hoped that man's reasonableness and tolerance would lead him to refashion the actual world in conformity with the rational world discovered by reflection.

Implication of Tolerance: Tolerance implies recognition of three aspects of human freedom:

1) the freedom to think and believe what one likes,

2) the freedom to lead one's life as one likes within society, and

3) the freedom to unite in corporate activity for realising certain ends, religious or secular.

Different societies give importance to either one or two types of freedoms

as cited above. But a high civilization ought to provide for all three aspects of freedom.

Meaning of Tolerance

"Each of the five and a half billion human beings living on this planet today can have his or her own ideas and preferences, and, without denying those ideas and preferences, can admit that those of others are just as worthy of respect", observed Ehsan Naraghi, Consultant for the June 1992 issue of UNESCO Courier published on the theme In Praise of Tolerance. The reason for tolerance is that "It is impossible that all differences can cease", wrote Swami Vivekanand, "it must exist; without variation life must cease."

Thus tolerance means that we live in peace and harmony with people who differ from us in language, religion, race, caste and custom. This means that we appreciate and esteem people although they differ from us in many ways. Tolerating means accepting the existence of that which is different.Tolerance is respect for others in their difference from oneself. For Voltaire, this value/virtue also contains an element of gentleness and benevolence, and he often uses the word "indulgent" to mean tolerant. "Tolerance means awareness of others, an attitude of openmindedness, of permanently trying to know, understand and learn from others, from the 'other'", as defined by Federico Mayor. Further he says that tolerance is never passive indifference or concession, never the imposition of uniformity upon social diversity, never compromise with oppression or acquiescence to evil. Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the endless richness of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. Tolerance is a constant attitude of *Ahimsa* because the word tolerance – as Mahatma Gandhi said – can imply a gratuitous assumption of inferiority of other faiths to one's own, whereas *Ahimsa* teaches the same respect for the religious faiths of others as we give to our own.

Thus, tolerance is harmony in difference. A tolerant man respects the right of his neighbour to hold his own views, to profess his own religion and to lead a life that he considers best for himself. A tolerant man makes allowances for the defects he notices in others. He accepts people for what

they are, together with their defects and qualities. A tolerant man is a thoroughbred gentleman. Cardinal Newman says, "a true gentleman... carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast – all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint, or suspicion or gloom or resentment; his great concern being to make everyone at ease and at home."

Need of Education for Tolerance

Education for tolerance is essential for the peace and survival of mankind. Tolerance education is urgently needed because during 1994, there were countless victims of political and cultural violence; and ethnic, religious and social intolerance. There was genocide in Rwanda (which wiped out between 500,000 and a million Tutsis), there was more ethnic cleansing in Bosnia (90% of Bosnia's non-Serbs have either been killed, imprisoned, or driven from their homes), and there was violence against schools, thinkers and writers in Algeria.

These are the reasons 1995 was proclaimed United Nations Year for Tolerance in order to heighten public awareness of the threat to peace posed by lack of tolerance between nations, between communities and between individuals. Director-General of UNESCO Federico Mayor, in his Address given as the Rajiv Gandhi Memorial Lecture in New Delhi on 1 May 1995, said "Tolerance is essential for the crucial transition from a culture of war, a culture of coercion, a culture of force and violence, to a culture of dialogue, of sharing, of conciliation ... a culture of peace." Bernard Williams also considers tolerance as necessary where different groups have conflicting beliefs – moral, political or religious – and they must realize that there is no alternative to their living together, no alternative, that is to say, except armed conflict, which will not resolve their disagreements and will impose continuous suffering. These are the circumstances in which tolerance is necessary. In his Utopia, Thomas More makes tolerance one of the essential virtues – essential not only to preserving the civil peace but also to the integrity of faith itself. India, from the very beginning, has been a multi-lingual, multi-racial and multi-religious society. It has been the meeting ground of many races and cultures. The Dravidians, the Aryans, the Huns, the Pathans, the Moguls

and the Europeans have entered India at different times and have made it their homeland. Therefore, education for tolerance is indispensable for the diverse peoples of India, who live together here as a nation, to prosper and progress.

Education for Tolerance and for Peace

Though mankind is one, every human being is a member of Humanity, a citizen of earth, *Vasudhav Kutumbakam* – the whole world is a human family, all men and women belong to the species homo sapiens; however, human beings are diverse in their ways of living, they have different cultures, religions, languages and opinions. Differences of opinion among the peoples of different races, cultures and religions are natural. Life will become intolerable if every individual thinks alike and acts alike. Diversity is in his constitution and to suppress it is to dehumanise him and ultimately the world; hence every person should have the right to differ for creativity and peace.

Therefore, education for tolerance and peace should be planned and structured in the curriculum of schools through university and continuing education throughout the world.

Some 100 Education Ministers of different states, who attended the 44th International Conference, held in Geneva in October 1994, pledged to promote education based on tolerance and respect for human rights. The ministers agreed to give "a major priority in education to young people, who are particularly vulnerable to incitements to intolerance, racism and xenophobia", and to take steps to ensure that educational institutions become ideal places for the practice of tolerance. The Framework of Action includes recommendations for incorporating into curricula at all educational levels – formal or informal – lessons on peace, human rights and the effects of racism. It also includes an endorsement for improving textbooks to eliminate negative stereotypes and distorted views of the "other". Religious textbooks should focus on themes and precepts shared by the world's different religions, and presented in the most neutral way possible.

Thus students in schools and universities as well children and adults outside educational establishments should be taught a sense of

understanding towards diverse people and their customs, traditions, languages and religions, and their contributions to mankind, and also taught about the importance of nonviolence and dialogue in resolving conflicts and differences. Besides this, the utility and value of altruism, trusteeship, equity, justice and protection of human rights; and the benefit of interdependence should be narrated to them.

Tahar Ben Jelloun considers tolerance as an uphill task which requires courage and strength, a robust attitude for the cut and thrust of debate, and an ability to stand up to pressure. He observes that tolerance does not come naturally but has to be inculcated until it becomes second nature to people, spontaneous, a kind of reflex – a difficult task, given all the resistance and all the temptations to be overcome. Hence he thinks that tolerance is something that has to be learned, a requirement that has to be lived with every day, a difficulty to be forced every moment of every day. Therefore, he says that tolerance is a way of living, and it starts in the primary school. Director-General of UNESCO Federico Mayor also knows of no better way or basis for this vital task of tolerance than through education, by laying the basis through learning at all levels for that concordance of sensibility, that recognition of similarity in difference, whereby tolerance becomes a propensity rather than a mere precept.

Here it is pertinent to cite an Appeal regarding Education for Tolerance, issued in 1994 in Los Angeles by the Director-General of UNESCO to the world's Heads of State and Government, to education ministers and officials, to the mayors of cities, towns and villages, to teachers, to religious communities, to journalists and to parents:

- to educate our children and young people with a sense of openness and comprehension towards other people, their diverse cultures and histories and their fundamental shared humanity;

- to teach them the importance of refusing violence and adopting peaceful means for resolving disagreements and conflicts;

- to forge, in the next generations, feelings of altruism, openness and respect towards others, solidarity and sharing based on a sense of security in one's own identity and a capacity to recognize the many dimensions of being human in different cultural and social contexts.

The Round Table on Education for Tolerance and Mutual Understanding –

the role of religions in the 44th Session of the International Conference on Education organised by UNESCO International Bureau of Education, has also made the following proposals:

- Education for tolerance and mutual understanding from the religious point of view needs a close examination of what all religions advocate, such as love, compassion, unity, the Golden Rule.
- Religions should be represented in schoolbooks (including textbooks for history, geography, etc.) in a differentiated and careful way.
- Background knowledge of one's own religion and its ethical principles is a prerogative for real tolerance and a help to overcome indifference as well as prejudices.
- Religious communities as well as public education should help to find a new type of encounter in which people of different faiths and their values and ways of life are respected.
- Young people should get to know the thoughts and deeds of personalities from different religions that are examples of concrete tolerance among religions.
- Interreligious encounters and organizations are supported.
- Educating the educators is of major importance. Particularly in teacher training and in in-service training, basic knowledge in the field of religions, ethics and values is to be included.
- Religions themselves were asked to take the main United Nations' Declarations concerning tolerance and religious freedom seriously.

How to Teach Tolerance

A good way to teach tolerance is practice of tolerance by the elders of different institutions of the society. These elders should practice tolerance towards others in their respective houses, then youngsters may naturally learn from them the value of tolerance, and in the long run these youngsters would transmit the spirit of tolerance to younger people, and the continuity of learning tolerance will be preserved and maintained in the society. However, dialogue and discussion are the proper methods for teaching

tolerance. Tolerance: The Threshold of Peace is the UNESCO publication to mark 1995 the UN International Year of Tolerance. It contains teaching guidelines for educating for tolerance. It focuses on education for tolerance in primary and secondary schools. There are five chapters in the guide which deal with questions of why it is necessary to educate for tolerance, how to diagnose intolerance and describe tolerance, the problems and opportunities, how schools themselves are a kind of laboratory for practicing tolerance, and, finally, how to include the concept of tolerance into every subject taught at every level and in every country.

UNESCO and Tolerance Education

UNESCO has for many years sought to promote teaching of tolerance in schools through its 3200 Associated Schools in 105 member states dedicated to preparing pupils for life in a global multi-cultural society. UNESCO has established an International Day for Tolerance beginning in 1995. UNESCO acted as coordinator of the 1995 events of the International Year for Tolerance, and its strategy focused on two elements. The first is to influence public opinion in favour of tolerance by demonstrating, through a series of cultural and social events planned all over the world, how tolerance is linked to peaceful coexistence. The second part of UNESCO's strategy is to offer medium and long-term solutions to people involved in educating for tolerance by providing them with backup materials dealing with issues such as improved methods for teaching languages, access to information on international institutions and human rights, and an approach to history and literature accenting the variety of cultures in the world.

UNESCO Prizes for Tolerance

A "Mahatma Gandhi Prize for Peace, Non-Violence and Tolerance" has been created, in cooperation with the Seneghalese National Commission for UNESCO.

A "Madanjeet Singh Prize for Tolerance and Non-Violence" has been instituted.

A UNESCO Prize for "Children's Literature in the Cause of Tolerance"

has been founded.

IAEWP and Education for Tolerance

The International Association of Educators for World Peace (IAEWP) is a living institution for teaching and learning tolerance. Since its inception in 1969, its many members, belonging to diverse cultures, religions and nationalities scattered in 93 states of the world, have been fostering the spirit of tolerance through imparting knowledge, sharing wisdom, creating awareness and understanding, and encouraging discussion and dialogue. To mark the International Year for Tolerance, the IAEWP, through its Kerala state chapter organised, from 17-19 September, 1995, at the Teachers Training Institute in Kannur (Kerala) India, a state Convention on the theme: education for tolerance and peace.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude with the views of a great teacher, Comenius, who observed almost 300 years ago:

> "If we want to develop humanity, we must seek untiringly the means of achieving that end. The means are threefold: first, people must recognise that it is unworthy of them to burden themselves and each other with hate for futile reasons; they must, in a general way, forgive past disputes, injustices and injuries. We shall call this, *erasing the past*. Second, none shall impose his or her philosophical, theological or political principles on any other person; on the contrary, everyone must allow everybody else to uphold their opinions and to enjoy in peace that which belongs to them. We shall call this *mutual tolerance*. And third, all people must endeavour, in a common effort, to find the best way of behaving and, to that end, must join their thoughts, their aspirations and their actions. And this we shall call *conciliation* ... ".

Therefore we must be capable of erasing the intolerance of the past and learn mutual tolerance, remembering that we five and a half billion diverse people living on this planet today are the members of one human family, and the whole world belongs to all of us. Hence, we must contribute

individually, collectively, and with mutual sharing in creating a Culture of Peace for the survival of all mankind and perpetual peace.

Note: This text was originally presented as a keynote address at the Kerala State Convention of IAEWP (International Association of Educators for World Peace), Teachers Training Institute, Kannur, Kerala, India, September 17, 1995. Some minor modifications have been introduced in the present version.

Some Notes on the Author

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